Subject: CCA Reflects - The Future of Downtown Mobility: New Uses for Old Streets - September 2018
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CCA Reflects is a monthly series where we share our insights on what is happening in DTLA and the region.

The Future of Downtown Mobility: New Uses for Old Streets

Dockless bicycles and scooters.

DASH service improvements and a countywide Metro bus route restructure.

My Figueroa, 7th Street, and Main & Spring Forward streetscape improvements.

Ride-hailing, electric car-share, charging stations, and autonomous vehicles.

The West Santa Ana Branch light rail line, DTLA Streetcar, and Regional Connector.

Reduced parking requirements, new design standards, and a Downtown transportation management organization (TMO).

The list goes on.

An exciting array of new services, plans, projects, and innovative technologies are changing how we move around DTLA. These changes can be transformative, but they won't come without growing pains. They'll require tough conversations about how we use our streets and how we prioritize transportation investments in the future, and CCA is taking a leadership role helping to reimagine the mobility landscape in Downtown LA.

In a built-up community like Downtown, our capacity for new roads has long been maxed out. And with 125,000 new residents and 55,000 new jobs headed to Downtown over the next 20 years, our streets will be seized by gridlock if everyone chooses to drive every day. Bus ridership is already declining throughout the county due to worsening traffic and slower average speeds, and maintaining the status quo is a recipe for continuing ridership losses, more single-occupancy driving, and increasing congestion.

This downward spiral sounds grim: traffic leads to declining bus ridership which leads to even more traffic. The good news is that the reverse is also possible: a virtuous cycle where prioritizing transit and active transportation increases ridership, and increasing ridership helps spur further investments and greater public support for transit and active transportation.

We can't create a city where congestion doesn't exist. In fact, if you look around the world you'll find that traffic is a sign of vibrancy and dynamism, and no city of our size and density has successfully eliminated congestion. What we can do, what Downtown should strive to do, and in fact what we must do to continue to grow and thrive, is to offer an alternative to congestion for those who would take it.

The first and most important step is to provide safe, affordable, and convenient alternatives to driving. Making those alternatives more appealing means using our public right-of-way differently, giving both space and priority to those who walk, bike, roll, bus, train, shuttle, or carpool. Very often, that additional space and priority will require converting car lanes and on-street parking spaces into more efficient uses.

Those changes will take many forms, and they must be implemented with context and thoughtfulness. In some places, wider and better-lit sidewalks will be a top priority. In other locations, protected lanes for scooters, bikes, and e-bikes will be needed to create a community-wide network of safe active transportation connections. Lanes reserved exclusively for transit and shuttles should be recognized as a reward for those who share their commute, not a penalty for those who drive.

The My Figueroa streetscape update includes all these changes and more, and it's already providing important lessons for future street redesigns. Through it we've seen the popularity of protected bike lanes and off-board transit stops, but also the challenges of coordinating multiple departments and encouraging new behaviors for road users, regardless of mode. As we implement future streetscape plans such as 7th Street and Main & Spring Forward, we must learn from past mistakes, build on our successes, and continue to test out new and innovative approaches.

Another example is CicLAvia, an ongoing open streets event where part of Los Angeles closes its streets to cars and turns them over to people walking and biking. Yesterday was perhaps the biggest CicLAvia yet, stretching all the way from the Walt Disney Concert Hall to Hollywood Bowl to celebrate the LA Philharmonic's 100th anniversary. CicLAvia regularly draws tens of thousands of attendees and it's exposed the incredible demand for alternatives to driving. It's a great example of the opportunity our streets represent for more flexible uses, and it shows what's possible when we give people options.

How and where street redesigns are implemented is a question for our entire community to explore; whether they happen at all should not be. There will be debate about the form that change should take, but we hope everyone can agree that change

will be necessary.

Our streets are the largest, most pervasive public resource we have, and a revitalized Downtown would be incomplete if it didn't include a new vision for that space. We're excited to work with our members to help create that new vision, and we look forward to a future for Downtown mobility that's full of choice, convenience, security, and speed.

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Central City Association of Los Angeles

Enhancing DTLA's vibrancy and increasing investment in the region

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